

FIRST WORLD REFUGEE DAY

AT THE STATUE OF LIBERTY NATIONAL MONUMENT AND ELLIS ISLAND

June 20, 2001

World Refugee Day

Refugees are people who have had to flee their countries because of persecution and war. They have often been forced to leave behind everything they know and love -- their homes, their loved ones, their possessions -- to seek safety in a new country. More than half of the refugees in the world are children.

Refugees survive incredible odds and overcome enormous difficulties and trauma to rebuild their lives. In some cases, they are able eventually to return home and reconstruct their homelands. When this is not possible, refugees must make a new life in a country of asylum that offers them protection from persecution.

Refugee Statistics

Some 22.3 million people come under UNHCR's responsibility. They are found in the following regions:

Africa	6,250,540
Asia	7,308,860
Europe	7,285,800
Latin America & Caribbean	90,170
North America	1,241,930
Oceania	80,040
(Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea)	

Of these, 11.67 million are **refugees**, 1.18 million are **asylum seekers**, 2.51 million are **returned refugees**, and 6.89 million are **internally displaced persons** or others.

In return, they bring their own skills, abilities and strengths to contribute to their new communities.

This year, on June 20, 2001, people all over the world will mark the first ever World Refugee Day in recognition and empathy for the world's refugees. It is an opportunity to thank countries all over the world for their generosity in hosting refugees, to recognize and honor refugees for the contributions they have made, and to raise awareness worldwide about the realities faced by refugees every day. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island are working together to raise awareness about refugees and to launch this important first-time international event.

The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island



Ellis Island was the first federally operated immigration station. It opened in 1892 and officially closed in 1954. During that time, over 12 million immigrants came through Ellis Island. Many of these people were fleeing political, religious or other persecution and today could be considered refugees. Almost half the population of America can trace a relative who came through Ellis Island.

The Statue of Liberty was a gift to the United States from the people of France. Dedicated on October 28, 1886, the Statue, titled "Liberty Enlightening the World", has become a universal symbol of liberty. In the following pages, you will find activities and information about the importance and relevance of the Statue to refugees around the world.



What is UNHCR?

UNHCR is the UN agency responsible for the safety and well-being of refugees worldwide. UNHCR staff work in 120 countries, often in dangerous or difficult field locations, to ensure protection for refugees and respect for their rights, to provide lifesaving assistance to those forced to flee their homes, and to find solutions to refugee situations, through voluntary return to home countries, integration in the host country or resettlement in third countries.

VOCABULARY

Refugee: Someone who flees his or her country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. A refugee either cannot return home or is afraid to do so.

Asylum: When a State offers protection on its territory, and the right to remain there, to individuals who would be in danger in their own country.

Persecution: Action to cause serious harm or suffering to individuals or groups because of their race, religion, nationality, group membership or political beliefs; serious violation of human rights.

Internally Displaced Person: Someone who has been forced to flee his or her home -- often for the same reasons as refugees flee -- but who has not crossed an international border and remains inside his or her own country.

Resettlement: Organized movement of refugees from one country (often the first country they fled to) to another. Resettlement is a way to provide safety for certain refugees who are at risk in the country where they first sought refuge.

Repatriation: When refugees return to their homeland. Voluntary repatriation -- choosing to return home in safety and dignity when conditions allow it -- is the preferred solution for refugees.

Human Rights: International standards that recognize and protect the dignity and integrity of every individual, without distinction.

Immigrant: Someone who chooses to come to another country to live and settle permanently.

Liberty: The quality or state of being free: freedom from physical restraint; freedom from arbitrary or despotic control; enjoyment of social, political, or economic rights and privileges; the power of choice.

SYMBOLISM OF THE STATUE

When Frederic August Bartholdi constructed the Statue of Liberty, he incorporated symbols into the giant monument. Match the following descriptions with the symbols in the Statue. Which of these symbols are particularly relevant to refugees? Why?*



A. Torch

B. 7 Spikes of Crown

C. 25 Windows in Crown

D. Tablet

E. Upraised foot

F. Broken shackles at feet

___ Freedom from tyranny

___ Enlightening the way to freedom

___ Law and order

___ Leading the way to freedom

___ Seas and continents of the world

___ Heaven's rays shining over the world

*(Answers: F, A, D, E, B, C. Relevance for refugees: B -- Human rights abuses and persecution can occur when law and order break down.)

The Statue's Crown: Refugees Around the World

The seven spikes of the Statue's crown represent the seven continents of the world. Write in the names of the continents, and then, using the table on page 1, estimate the number of refugees currently found on each continent.

Continent: _____

Number of Refugees: _____

Continent: _____

of Refugees: _____

Continent: _____

of Refugees: _____

Continent: _____

of Refugees: _____



Continent: _____

of Refugees: _____

Continent: _____

of Refugees: _____

Continent: _____

of Refugees: _____

The Statue's Poem

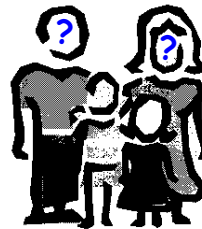
In 1883, Emma Lazarus wrote a poem about the Statue of Liberty. Today, the poem is engraved at the base of the Statue, and its words are familiar to visitors from all over the world.

Read the poem below. What does it say about the Statue of Liberty as a world symbol? Highlight words and phrases in the poem that have particular relevance and meaning for refugees. Explain your choices.

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land,
Here at our sea-washed, sunset-gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome, her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin-cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she,
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore;
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"



Find a Refugee

Visit UNHCR's Gallery of Prominent Refugees online at www.unhcr-50.org/gallery/igallery.html. Do you recognize any names of the

refugees featured there? What do these people have in common?

Now, find a refugee in your own family or in your community. Talk to your parents and grandparents -- did your ancestors ever have to leave their homeland? If so, why? Would they have been considered refugees (did they leave to escape persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or social group?) Write up their story -- where they lived, when they left, why they left, what happened to them in their new country - - and email it to USAWA@unhcr.ch. Your family story could become part of UNHCR's Gallery of Prominent Refugees.

If you visit Ellis Island, you can also search for refugees in the oral history database (available on weekdays only). Try to find people who came through Ellis Island and who left their homelands because of persecution.

Where do today's refugees come from?

Look at the list of the top ten countries of origin of refugees worldwide today. Find these countries on the map below and mark them in red. Research one of these refugee groups. Why did they flee their homelands? Where are they now? Mark their main countries of asylum on the map in blue.

Collect news stories about refugees in different countries and catalogue them by region. Which regions get the most news coverage? Which ones get the least?

You can find out about these refugee groups and their countries of origin and asylum on UNHCR's website www.unhcr.ch.



Top ten countries of origin of refugees (as of Jan. 1, 2000)

<u>Country of Origin</u>	<u>Main Countries of Asylum</u>	<u># of refugees</u>
Afghanistan	Iran / Pakistan / India	2,562,000
Iraq	Iran / Saudi Arabia / Syria	572,500
Burundi	Tanzania / D.R. Congo	525,700
Sierra Leone	Guinea / Liberia / Gambia	487,200
Sudan	Uganda / Ethiopia / D.R. Congo / Kenya / Central African Rep. / Chad	467,700
Somalia	Ethiopia / Kenya / Yemen / Djibouti	451,600
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yugoslavia / Croatia / Slovenia	448,700
Angola	Zambia / D.R. Congo / Congo	350,600
Eritrea	Sudan	345,600
Croatia	Yugoslavia / Bosnia-Herzegovina	340,400

For more information and teaching resources, contact:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
1775 K Street, NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20006
email: usawa@unhcr.ch
website: www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm

National Park Service
Statue of Liberty National Monument
Ellis Island Immigration Museum
Liberty Island
New York, NY 10004
website: www.nps.gov/stli